

Message Text

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E.O. 11652 : XGDS-1

TAGES : MARR, EAID, BA

SUBJECT : MIDDLE EAST FORCE AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

REF : MANAMA 0639

SUMMARY: MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER ON MIDDLE EAST FORCE DELAYED UNTIL JUNE 11 WITH GOB PREOCCUPIED WITH SECURITY DECREE SITUATION AND APPARENTLY SINCERELY, IF INEXPLICABLY, HUNG UP ON ISSUE OF EXCHANGING MIDDLE EAST FORCE DOCUMENTS. I AM NOT SANGUINE I CAN BUDGE HIM JUNE 11. RECOMMEND FOR POLICY REASONS DISCUSSED BELOW URGENT RECONSIDERATION OUR POSITION OF LINKING FY 75 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FUNDING WITH CONCLUSION MIDDLE EAST FORCE NEGOTIATIONS. RECOMMEND I BE INSTRUCTED, IF GOB FAILS TO AGREE TO EXCHANGE DOCUMENTS OR GIVE US CONFIDENTIAL LETTER OF INTENT AT THIS TIME, TO INFORM GOB WE ARE PREPARED TO MOVE AHEAD WITH TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM. END SUMMARY.

1. OBVIOUSLY PREOCCUPIED WITH THE SECURITY DECREE ISSUE, FOREIGN MINISTER JUNE 7 PUT OFF OUR NEXT MEETING UNTIL JUNE 11. SUBSEQUENTLY I HAD CONFIRMATION CABINET ON JUNE 7 DEALT SOLELY WITH SECURITY DECREE ISSUE AND DID NOT DISCUSS MIDDLE EAST FORCE NEGOTIATIONS.

2. JUNE 9 I HAD LONG LOBBYING SESSION WITH MINISTER INFORMATION, EXPLAINING MY CONCERN THAT ALL MEMBERS OF CABINET MIGHT NOT FULLY UNDERSTAND RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TIMING

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PROBLEM IN FUNDING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND MIDDLE EAST FORCE

NEGOTIATIONS. ALSO STRESSED POINT, TO WHICH SHIRAWI AND BAHARNA HAD EARLIER AGREED, THAT THE IMPLEMENTING ARRANGEMENTS TO WHICH WE HAVE AGREED ARE IN ALL CASES SUPPORTIVE OF GOB POSITION RE NAVY PRESENCE. HENCE, IN FORMALLY CONCLUDING THESE NEGOTIATIONS BY EXCHANGE OF DOCUMENTS, GOB IS STRENGTHENING ITS CASE WITH ITS PARLIAMENT AND NEIGHBORS AND IN NO WAY ENTERING INTO SOME OPEN-ENDED COMMITMENT OR "RENEWING" THE STATIONING AGREEMENT. MINISTER INFORMATION, WHO IS GENERALLY SYMPATHETIC TO U.S. INTERESTS, FULLY COMPREHENDS ABOVE POINTS.

3. ON BASIS OUR DISCUSSION, I HAVE IMPRESSION CABINET WILL DISCUSS MIDDLE EAST FORCE QUESTION IN ITS JUNE 10 MEETING. I CAME AWAY FROM MEETING WITH INFORMATION MINISTER SENSING THAT IN OUR SCHEDULED JUNE 11 MEETING, FOREIGN MINISTER IS NOT GOING TO EXCHANGE MIDDLE EAST FORCE DOCUMENTS NOR AM I CERTAIN HE WILL BUY PLOY OF GIVING ME CONFIDENTIAL LETTER OF INTENT.

4. ON BASIS MINISTER INFORMATION'S REMARKS, I AM INCREASINGLY CONVINCED GOB IS HUNG UP ON THE POTENTIAL EMBARRASSMENT IT WOULD FEEL IF IT EXCHANGED DOCUMENTS AND THEN SOME MONTHS LATER HAD TO AGREE IN THE CONTEXT OF REGIONAL SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS THAT U.S. NAVY MUST EVENTUALLY LEAVE BAHRAIN. GOB ALSO NERVOUS ABOUT ITS PRESENT PARLIAMENTARY SITUATION AND, ACCORDING TO MINISTER INFORMATION, CONCERNED THAT ONGOING CONGRESSIONAL FOREIGN POLICY DEBATES ARE GOING TO PUBLICIZE QUESTION OF U.S. BASES ABROAD IN GENERAL AND MIDDLE EAST FORCE PRESENCE IN PARTICULAR.

5. IF THIS IS INDEED GOB'S CAST OF MIND, IT WILL IF NECESSARY ACCEPT RELUCTANTLY POSTPONEMENT OF A U.S. TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM RATHER THAN FEEL "STAMPEDED" INTO TAKING A STEP ABOUT WHICH IT IS VAGUELY NERVOUS. IN SHORT, OUR CONTENTION THAT WE CANNOT GO AHEAD WITH TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IN ABSENCE FORMAL CONCLUSION MIDDLE EAST FORCE NEGOTIATIONS IS SIMPLY NOT GOING TO BE EFFECTIVE PRESSURE ON GOB. AT SAME TIME, I AM PERSUADED GOB IS ABSOLUTELY SINCERE IN ITS INTENTION TO RETAIN MIDDLE EAST FORCE AS LONG AS ITS NEIGHBORS WILL PERMIT AND AM SANGUINE THAT IN REALITY THAT COULD BE A LONG, SECRET

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LONG TIME.

6. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, I URGE IMMEDIATE RECONSIDERATION OUR PRESENT POSITION ON DELAYING TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM UNTIL GOB EXCHANGES DOCUMENTS. IN THE FIRST PLACE, WE HAVE ESSENTIALLY WHAT WE WANT; MIDDLE EAST FORCE IS HERE AND NO ONE HAS YET ASKED IT TO LEAVE. HOWEVER FRUSTRATING IT MAY SEEM TO US THAT GOB HESITATES TO ACCEPT RELATED

CONCESSIONS THAT WE ARE PREPARED TO EXTEND, WE ARE LOSING LITTLE IN REALITY BY THEIR DELAY. MORE FUNDAMENTALLY, IF WE ARE TO BE PLAUSIBLE IN CONTENDING THAT MIDDLE EAST FORCE IS HERE TO DEMONSTRATE U.S. INTEREST IN AND SUPPORT FOR ORDERLY DEVELOPMENT OF BAHRAIN AND ITS NEIGHBORS, IT FOLLOWS LOGICALLY THAT PROVIDING SMALL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IN BAHRAIN SERVES THE SAME GOAL. SOME MIGHT ARGUE IT BETTER SERVES THAT GOAL. HENCE, IF WE CANNOT PERSUADE CONGRESS OF DESIRABILITY TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM STANDING ON ITS OWN MERITS, HOW CAN WE ULTIMATELY PERSUADE CONGRESS OF DESIRABILITY RETAINING MIDDLE EAST FORCE PRESENCE IN GULF?

7. I FEAR THAT IN RETROSPECT WE MIGHT FACE EXTREMELY EMBARRASSING SITUATION IF NEXT SEPTEMBER U.S. NAVY IS HERE AND UNDER NO PRESSURE TO LEAVE WHILE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ADVISORS ARE NOT.

8. RECOMMENDATION: IN SCHEDULED JUNE 11 MEETING, I INTEND TO TRY TO GET FOREIGN MINISTER TO EXCHANGE MIDDLE EAST FORCE DOCUMENTS AND, FAILING THAT, TO TRY THE PLOY OF THE CONFIDENTIAL LETTER OF INTENT. I RECOMMEND THAT, TO SERVE OUR OWN OVERALL INTERESTS IN BAHRAIN AND THE GULF, I BE INSTRUCTED PRIOR TO THE MEETING TO INFORM HIM, IF HE IS UNWILLING TO EXCHANGE EITHER DOCUMENTS OR CONFIDENTIAL LETTER AT THAT TIME, THAT USG HAS RECONSIDERED SITUATION AND IS PREPARED TO NOTIFY CONGRESS OF ITS INTENT TO MOVE AHEAD WITH NEGOTIATION OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IN BAHRAIN.

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